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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 000349

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/IPA, NEA/ELA  
NSC FOR SHAPIRO/MCDERMOTT  
LONDON FOR TSOU, PARIS FOR WALLER

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [JO](#) [SY](#)  
SUBJECT: JORDANIAN KING ABDULLAH DROPS INTO DAMASCUS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Maura Connelly for reasons 1.4(b,d)

¶1. (C) The brief and short-notice May 11 visit of Jordan's King Abdullah II to Damascus concluded successfully according to Syrian press and the Jordanian Consul, Anas Oran. Though King Abdullah was only on the ground for three hours, the visit was constructive, with the King meeting privately with President Bashar Al-Asad in the People's Palace for roughly 45 minutes. He then attended a working lunch, hosted by Asad, which included senior members of the Syrian government such as Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallim. The Jordanian diplomat confirmed media reports that the expressed purpose of the visit was to brief President Asad on the outcome of King's April 21 meeting with President Obama. Additionally, the diplomat indicated Asad passed "some type" of message to King Abdullah intended for Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, though our contact had no specific details on the nature of the message.

¶2. (C) Consul Oran reported the Jordanian Embassy was particularly pleased with the laudatory news coverage of the Syrian-controlled press, which had not traditionally been the case. The Jordanian Embassy here reacted positively to signals they received from the SARG on the possibility of Jordan serving as an intermediary between the U.S. and Syria; such previous offers had been immediately rebuffed by the SARG the diplomat noted.

¶3. (C) Separately, Consul Oran recounted what he characterized as a "strange" comment by FM Muallim during the lunch. According to the diplomat, who did attend the lunch, Muallim "out of nowhere" stated that the appointment of Salam Fayyad as Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority would be unacceptable to the Syrian government. The diplomat reported that the King did not respond to the Muallim's outburst.

¶4. (C) Comment: The King's readout provided Bashar with an unusually reliable source of information with respect to Washington dynamics, though it is well within Bashar's ability to misinterpret the briefing. If the reporting on Muallim's comment regarding Fayyad is indeed accurate, the schizophrenic nature of Syrian foreign policy once again reared its ugly face. On one hand, President Asad welcomed King Abdullah with open arms and expressed support for a comprehensive peace during the same week in he received Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. Meanwhile, FM Muallim's endorsement of a Hamas talking-point underscores that Syria's assertions of a constructive approach are highly suspect.  
CONNELLY